

# Los Alamos Daze

*Memories of Bonnie and George, 1972-1975*

*by Susan Simonsic*

*George and Bonnie were assigned to Los Alamos in 1972-1975. Everyone was young, smart, having babies and parties and enjoying Life. Best friends included Susan and Gary Simonsic. George was trained as a nuclear physicist, Gary was a chemist. There was no base housing in Los Alamos and the Simonsics lived two doors away in White Rock with their two children Michael and Christine. I asked Susan for some of her memories of those days.*

*Sometimes you have to be careful what you ask for ...*

## **Bonnie Stories**

The first time it snowed in Los Alamos after Bonnie and George moved there, Bonnie was running up and down the street yelling, "It's snowing! It's snowing!" (She was a southern California gal who had never before seen snow fall.)

She dressed her girls in warm winter coats, boots, hats, and mittens and sent them out to play in the snow. The girls got cold, the dog kept jumping up and pulling off their mittens, and they all three came back in, crying, soaking wet and freezing, dripping water everywhere, and begging to get to stay inside.

A few hours later after several inches piled up Bonnie was running up and down the street yelling, "When does this shit stop?"

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I was frosting Bonnie's hair and ran out of bleach. I didn't have a car, plus there were five kids in the house. Solution – Bonnie puts on a scarf to cover up the frosting cap with her hair pulled through it and goes to the store to buy more bleach.

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I decided to give Bonnie a surprise Birthday Party after she told me "**no party**".

Everything was ready, guests were in place, the only thing we needed was Bonnie. I just called Bonnie, and in a panic voice told her I needed her help with one of the kids, that Michael was choking and I didn't know what to do. Bonnie had just gotten out of the shower, didn't have time to dress properly or put in her contact lenses. Being such a great friend she asked no questions, just came running----flew in the front door where a group of gals yelled "**Surprise!** Happy Birthday!" We all had fun but I was on her shit list for a while.

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One day standing on the front porch at Bonnie and George's house, Bonnie got this brilliant idea to take down the front porch rails. What are good friends for! We both got hammers and went to town and in no time at all the railings were gone. When George came home, he was not too happy but he got over it.

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The most embarrassing thing I did with Bonnie was to help her hang wall paper the day after I ate several bowls of chili. We were having trouble making the wall paper stick ... of course, Bonnie blamed it on me. The more we laughed the worse the smell got and the more the wall paper unrolled. Not knowing exactly what to do, we got a bottle of Elmers glue and glued the wall paper to the wall.

**George Stories**

Bonnie wanted an addition to the kitchen. One Saturday, George and a couple of his buddies decided to start. They proceeded to knock out an exterior wall. Then they decided that maybe they should make some plan as to what they were going to build on the other side of this opening.

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George was always the perfect officer and gentleman. George would insist on helping Susan put on her ski boots. Susan felt she was a big girl and could do it herself.

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One day George went skiing with Gary. Gary had tire chains on the front wheels of his 4-wheel drive pickup, as the snow on the road was deep. At the end of the day as they headed off the mountain, Gary stopped to take the chains off. George offered to remove the chains for him. Gary said he had an easy system to do it. George insisted on doing it. Before long he had the chains tightly wrapped around the front axle. Gary was not a happy skier.

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George decided he wanted to carpool with Gary. All well and fine except George would forget to bring Gary home after work and Gary would have to call Susan to come get him. Carpooling didn't last too long.

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George was notorious for driving down the street in the morning with a coffee cup on the car roof.

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On a camping trip in Colorado, George cut so much firewood at Gary and Susan's campsite that no one else the whole summer would need to get firewood. He also made popcorn that the kids proceeded to drop all over the ground. That night Gary and Susan had an army of furry creatures outside their tent. Quite unnerving. By morning the campsite was clean. Oh yes, Bonnie and George were staying safely in a cabin a few miles away.

**Kids**

Each of Susan's kids had a two-wheeler bike. In Bonnie's family, only Marcey had a two-wheeler and Beth would sit on the curb and cry because she couldn't ride a bike. Finally, Gary asked Bonnie, "is it OK if I teach her?" Bonnie said, "Sure!" Gary took Beth to a small hill by the elementary school. Gary told her "I'm going to push you down the hill and if you don't pedal and steer you're going to crash."

It was a grassy slope and if you did fall over, it wasn't bad. After about three crashes and a few tears Beth proudly rode the bike home. Bonnie said, "Oh, great, now we have to buy another bike!"

Many years later Gary was the first person Beth called to say she was going into training as a motorcycle cop. Proud moment for Gary.

George was trying to stop smoking so he was constantly eating sunflower seeds. Katy, still a crawler found some shells on the floor and swallowed them. She developed a "whistling" sound when she breathed. She ended up having to have surgery to remove them from her lungs.

When people came to visit Bonnie and George, Katy would crawl around on the floor and bite them on the ankles.

Katy would get up early Saturday mornings and go next door to Tommy and Juanita Lawrence's house and crawl in bed with them.

One Easter Bonnie and George had a party. When parents told their kids don't eat too much candy George said it was his house and the kids could eat all the candy they wanted. He didn't think it was such a good idea after they started barfing all over his house.

Bonnie and George would babysit Christine when Gary, Susan, and Michael went skiing as Christine wanted nothing to do with skiing at that time. In return Gary and Susan would watch the three girls when Bonnie and George went out. Good deal all around.

### **Parties**

Bonnie and George once came to a Halloween party dressed as a happily married couple.

Seems there had been a confrontation earlier that evening.

New Year's Eve at the Los Alamos Inn: a guy on the dance floor got pushy. George (politely) asked him to settle down. The guy took a swing at George. George ducked and Bonnie took the punch square in the chest.

Then a melee broke out, and some people got pushed into the dance band. George and Bonnie left the party before the cops arrived.

At a party one night a guy was making out with his wife and at the same time thought Bonnie was next to him and began running his hand up her leg. Actually it was George sitting next to him. George proceeded to say, "Fella you go much higher and you're going to be in for a surprise."

At one party George got sick and barfed in the people's bushes. He then proceeded to go into their bathroom, looking for some mouth wash. He couldn't find any so he gargled with the hostess' Estee Lauder perfume.

George would fart on the dance floor and then quickly steer Bonnie somewhere else.

Bonnie and George held a wine tasting party hosted by a serious connoisseur. Guests would swirl and sip and try to identify the wine. Some of us would just chug and yell out "Red!" or "White!" Who had more fun?

We had a neighborhood volleyball group that played one night a week at the elementary school. It was husbands and wives and we played for fun and drank beer afterwards. On night one of George's friends came. He was a former college player. He thought we should play by Olympic rules. Needless to say he never came back.

Bonnie was responsible for getting Gary to go out on the dance floor for the first time. A few years later Gary and Susan were disco dancers entering dance competitions.

Many Sunday afternoons Bonnie would call up neighbors and say “I don’t feel like cooking. If you have any leftovers in the refrigerator bring them over and we’ll have a potluck.”

We loved having Bonnie and George as neighbors. The neighborhood was never the same after they moved.

### **Background by Bonnie:**

We had three little girls when we arrived in September 1972: Marcey was 5, Beth was 3, Katy was not yet two years old. We made some of our closest friends in White Rock (Los Alamos suburb) with Susan and Gary Simonsic, Tommy and Juanita Lawrence, and others. Housing for those of us assigned to Los Alamos was at a premium. We were offered any one of exactly three houses: one was unfinished, one had standing water in the basement, and we took the third, in White Rock. It had three bedrooms, all on (one) floor.

One morning, it was snowing, and the top on George’s Mustang convertible had been removed while a new top had been ordered. George took the family’s station wagon to work. It was still snowing when Bonnie had to take the girls to school, and she had no choice but to drive the Mustang. She got an umbrella, and held it up with one hand while she drove with the other. Somehow she made it.

### **Epilogue:**

For their next assignment, George were assigned to a staff position on the *USS Enterprise* (CCAN-65) with their home to be in Dublin, California. Bonnie and the girls flew out, while George drove the Mustang, leaving the station wagon in Los Alamos with a friend. It had not been diagnosed yet, but George had a condition known as narcolepsy – he would fall asleep with little or no notice. To counter the condition, he would often pick up a hitchhiker to assist with the driving.

This time he was flagged down by two hitchhikers, a brother and sister. The sister was wearing bib overalls, with no apparent bra or underwear. They were hippies and they took George to a hippy commune somewhere in New Mexico. When they got there, they asked him if he had any booze. He had a bottle of Scotch and they drank the bottle of scotch that night. That night George slept in the car, and the “brother and sister” ended up sleeping together in a sleeping bag.

The next morning George was asked to chip in some cash so the group could buy some eggs for breakfast. The inhabitants only had two or three forks and one plate, and they would feed one person, then give the dog the plate to lick before they dished up the next person. The dog was the dishwasher. George went without breakfast.

